

Message Text

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67

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 MC-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 NIC-01 ACDA-19 IO-14 SAJ-01 DRC-01

AID-20 IGA-02 EB-11 /194 W

----- 062683

R 202238Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LIMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8191

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO/POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 9252

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MASS, PE, US, EC, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET TANK PURCHASE

REF: LIMA 8238, 9224, 9229

1. REFERRING TO PRESIDENT VELASCO'S PRESS STATEMENT OF YESTERDAY (LIMAS 9224 AND 9229), FOREIGN MINISTER DE LA FLOR MADE HIS "DISCULPAS" TODAY FOR "NOT HAVING KNOWN" OF PURCHASE WHEN WE SPOKE OF THIS MATTER LAST (NOVEMBER 9 - LIMA 8238). HE WAS OBVIOUSLY EMBARRASSED AND WENT TO GREAT LENGTHS TO EXPLAIN HOW IT WAS THAT "HE HAD NOT KNOWN OF THE PURCHASE AGREEMENT." HE SAID THE PURCHASE HAD BEEN FINALLY AGREED "EARLIER" THIS YEAR BUT WAS A RESULT OF MERCADO'S VISIT IN 1972 WHEN THE SOVIETS HAD MADE A VERY ATTRACTIVE OFFER. HE THEN LAUNCHED INTO A LENGTHY PRESENTATION ON ECUADOREAN PURCHASES OF FRENCH ARMS INCLUDING TANKS. (HE SAID HE HAD CALLED IN ECUADOREAN AMBASSADOR LUNA TO EXPRESS PERU'S DISMAY OVER A BURGEONING ARMS RACE ON THIS COAST.) HE ALSO REFERRED TO ALLEGED LARGE CHILEAN PURCHASES OF FRENCH

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AND BRITISH ARMS AND SAID THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT SIT "BRAZOS

CRUZADOS" IN SUCH A SITUATION. I AGREED, BUT SUGGESTED THEY MIGHT BEST GET TOGETHER TO TRY TO DISPEL THE SUSPICIONS THAT WERE GIVING RISE TO THIS APPARENT ESCALATION OF PURCHASES.

2. DE LA FLOR WENT ON TO REMIND ME THAT US RESTRICTIONS ON ARMS SALES TO PERU HAD GIVEN RISE TO A SEARCH IN 1972 FOR OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPLY. THE SOVIET OFFERS WERE ATTRACTIVE AS REGARDS PRICE AND DELIVERY AND PERU HAD BOUGHT.

3. I MENTIONED MY CONVERSATION WITH MERCADO LAST YEAR WHEN WE DISCUSSED MERITS OF OR LACK THEREOF OF THE RUSSIAN T-54 TANK. I REITERATED OUR BELIEF THEY WERE GOOD FOR PARADES. DE LA FLOR APPEARED SOMEWHAT SURPRISED AND SAID HE "THOUGHT" IT WAS THE T-54 THEY HAD BOUGHT. IN CLOSING HE SAID HE HOPED WE WOULD APPRECIATE THAT THIS PURCHASE WAS DONE ON THE BASIS OF WHAT WE WOULD REFER TO AS "PRICE AND AVAILABILITY" AND DID NOT REPRESENT A CHANGE IN GOP PREFERENCE FOR US ARMS - WITNESS OTHER ARMY, AIR FORCE AND NAVAL PURCHASES.

BELCHER

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